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LOCAL LEADERSHIP ASSURES SUCCESS

A radio talk by Miss Madge J. Reese, Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, broadcast Saturday, December 4, 1937, in the National Farm and Home Hour by 85 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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The 75th Anniversary of the establishment of the United States Department of Agriculture and the system of land-grant agricultural colleges in the States, was celebrated recently in Washington, D. C. The celebration included special programs at Thomas Jefferson's home, Monticello, near Charlottesville, Virginia; at Washington's home, Mount Vernon on the Potomac and at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. The reason for these pilgrimages was to recall to our minds that Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln were not only great statesmen of their day but were also leaders with vision and action in the interest of agriculture. School children of today are taught that these men of history possessed certain qualities and abilities which distinguished them as great leaders.

Does it take anything different today to be a real leader in agriculture and in rural life - in 4-H Club work for instance? - No, it doesn't. Time brings changes in conditions and in opportunities but the same qualifications for leadership still hold good. In the large cities, in the villages and in our home communities in the country, we find men and women with the will to learn and the will to do and with the ability of guiding others in learning and doing. First, a leader must have some technical knowledge and enthusiasm for the interest or problem at hand. To succeed in guiding others in constructive activities, certainly it takes a good understanding of human nature, and faith in people, backed up with plenty of courage, persistence and patience. Also other important high-scoring qualities are tact, a sense of humor, and a modest amount of self-confidence.

In 4-H Club work, we do not take it for granted that local leaders are "just born". Our State extension leaders, subject-matter specialists and county extension agents conduct training meetings for local leaders in the Counties. In 1936, 26,000 such training meetings were held in 2400 counties with a total attendance of 424,000. Technical information is explained, demonstrations in techniques are given and methods for carrying out the 4-H Club program in the communities and in the county are decided upon and planned.

Happy is the man or woman who keeps on learning; who has made learning a habit! We have heard local leaders in 4-H Club work and in the Home Demonstration Work claim that they have gained a liberal education over a period of years through the training and the experience as local leaders. One farm woman has said that she has learned the art of working and playing with others in harmony and consequently this had helped to make her own home a more smoothly running institution.

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It has been the training and development of local leadership over a period of years that now makes it possible for the extension agents to carry the enrollment of 1,145,000 boys and girls in the 4-H Clubs. The increase from approximately 48,000 to more than 100,000 leaders in a 10-year period is an indication of the increasing importance of the local leader in 4-H Club Work. Studies show that the greater number of these volunteer leaders are between the ages of 25 and 45. In recent years more attention has been given to encouraging and training the more advanced Club members to assist in conducting the activities of the younger groups. At least 25,000 of these young men and women assisted this past year in some 2000 counties. We have just heard today two of these more experienced Club members from Oregon and Indiana tell us of their leadership activities.

Rural boys and girls, young men and women are organized in 4-H Clubs by the Extension Service for the purpose of demonstrating approved farm and home practices which will reinforce the agricultural and home improvement program. Perhaps it is the dairy calf or the sheep club needed most in a particular county. We might decide on the corn, cotton or sugar beet projects in sections far distant from each other. Without much question food preparation, clothing and house furnishing activities in girls' club work are wanted and needed throughout the whole country. A great variety of farm and home interests have been developed through 4-H Club Work -- and always with this one thing in mind that the extension workers and the local leaders so conduct the work that we inspire in rural boys and girls high ideals in regard to country living, community cooperation and self-development.

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